

Skillfulness What the Buddha Taught

The main purpose of everyone is happiness. People do everything in the name of happiness. Especially, people are eager to develop their skills among others in education, employment, personality and strength to succeed in their life. In modern technology and communication, people are interested in going forward passing others in the world. Dedicating their all strengths people wish to live peacefully and happily throughout their entire life. Unfortunately, most people in the world growing less and less happy day by day and live unsatisfied during their old age. Finally, they end their lives unhappily. The reason of this situation is the inability of living in the present moment reflecting on the reality which is impermanence. Hence, all Buddhist doctrines focus on developing mindfulness and mindful meditation for real contentment of beings.

All teachings that the Buddha illustrated focus on developing our skills to the maximum level. The purpose of Buddhist view is not to worry or suffer in any kind of physical or mental issues in our life. The main goal of all Buddhist doctrines is to point out suffering and how to get rid of suffering. Similarly, Buddhism explains happiness and the way to achieve happiness. The Buddha realized and discovered the main challenges in our lives. They are old age, death and rebirth. To get rid of these challenges Buddhism always guides us to develop mindfulness and wisdom in the name of real happiness and liberation from all sufferings. If anyone can overcome life challenges making a pure mind by practicing this path, that is the skillfulness which Buddhism describes.

We should be different among the ordinary people if we are really skillful: -

Once the Buddha kindly says how we should live differently among the ordinary people.

Let's live happily without anger among the people those who are angry.

Let's live happily without mental illnesses among the people those who are mentally ill.

Let's live happily without longing sensual pleasure among those who are seeking sensual pleasures.

Buddhism points out the main reasons of suffering. If we suffer in any given time, our mind is polluted with lustful desire (or greed), anger (or hatred) and ignorance (or delusion). If someone wants to overcome suffering, he or she has to eradicate these three defilements from his or her mind completely. Our real happiness depends on how far we have to overcome unwholesome thoughts like greed, anger and delusion. Also, our skillfulness depends on decreasing above defilements.

Beginning the discourse of Metta, the Buddha declares the qualities that a person who wishes to attain peace should develop in his character. One of the qualities is skillfulness (*Sakko*). Here skillfulness means the understanding arising and ceasing of suffering. It means understanding the four noble truths.

The Buddha says very clearly in his words, I declare the cessation of suffering to the person who knows the Dhamma, who sees the Dhamma, not to the person who doesn't know the Dhamma, who doesn't see the Dhamma (*Jānato aham bhikkhave passato āsavānam khayam vadāmi, no ajānato no apassato*). Here it is very important to know the process of arising and ceasing of suffering. Understanding of getting rid of suffering depends on understanding of the dependent origination (*Paticcasamuppāda*). Also, understanding of the dependent origination means understanding of the process of our entire life.

We continuously experience through our six senses which are eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. When objects such as forms, sounds, smell, taste reach the senses, we experience the world. The Buddha describes our entire world is these six internal senses and external objects. The nature of this experience is arising at the moment and instantly ceasing at once. Anything is not permanent among those twelve things. They arise and cease at the moment according to the conditions. They are **"Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence, being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence"** (අනුන්වා සම්භවං භුන්වා න භවිස්සති). It means if we experience something now, it was not happened in the past in the same way like now. This is the special teaching that Buddhism teaches us as impermanence in the concept of the dependent origination. If we can understand and keep our mindfulness according to this knowledge, we can overcome all kinds of sufferings. Here, first we have to develop our knowledge, secondly, according to knowledge, we have to reflect on it, and finally, we have to apply it in our life practicing tranquility and insight meditation.

Whenever we experience something through our senses five aggregates arise. We experience something about forms, sounds, smell, taste, touch and volitions as the result of arising of five aggregates. Not only five aggregates arise, but they immediately cease without remaining anything. This is the nature of any experience we receive through our senses. Five aggregates are form, feelings, perception, mental formations and consciousness. These five aggregates are also impermanent. Buddha says very clearly, he declares to reflect on these five aggregates as arising and ceasing to persons who are in any kind of spiritual state. As the result of reflecting on five aggregates as arising and ceasing, impermanence can be realized by the disciple who knows the Dhamma, who sees the Dhamma. Then unsatisfactoriness and selflessness are also understood. **According to the Abhiññā Sutta, the highest skillfulness of an intelligent person is the understanding of the five aggregates. Further the discourse explains the main things that should be given up are ignorance and desire to becoming (*Bhava Tanha*). After the understanding of arising and ceasing of the five aggregates the skillful disciple always lives reflecting on the three characteristics which are impermanence, suffering and egolessness. Simultaneously, learned disciple frequently practices tranquility and insight meditation like his breathing. Practicing tranquility and wisdom is the highest practice of the intelligent person. If someone can be on this path, he or she is always going on the path of purification reaching ultimate liberation. The highest achievement of the intelligent and skillful person is knowledge and liberation from all sufferings.**

The Buddha says clearly at the very beginning in the discourse of *Metta*, as a person who wishes to have a calm, quiet and a peaceful life has to cultivate skillfulness or proficiency (*Sakkho*). Our skillfulness or proficiency depends on how much we are clever not to worry in unpleasant situations and not to get attached in desires. Here, the Buddha's disciple who identified three defilements (greed, anger and delusion) which disturb his peace of mind always tries to overcome negative thoughts. For that he practices generosity and contemplate on impurity of the body against greed or lustful desire. Also, he practices loving kindness against anger or ill will. Further, he reflects on impermanence against delusion.

As the result of listening to the Buddha's message, if someone knows the cause of suffering as desire which arises because of ignorance, he further doesn't like to suffer and, he tries to get rid of suffering as much as he can. Then he encounters a path that leads to overcome suffering. That is the Eight Fold Path.

1. Right Understanding (*Sammā ditti*)
2. Right Thoughts (*Sammā sankappa*)
3. Right Speech (*Sammā vācā*)
4. Right Action (*Sammā Kammanta*)
5. Right Livelihood (*Sammā ājiva*)
6. Right Effort (*Sammā vāyāma*)
7. Right Mindfulness (*Sammā sati*)
8. Right Concentration (*Sammā samādhi*)

When a person practices this path with understanding unsatisfactoriness and, when he sees the results of practicing this path in this life itself, his confidence in the Buddha's enlightenment, the Buddha's message and his noble disciples gradually increases. With seeing results, purifying his mind, being happy he goes on the path of getting rid of suffering towards the final bliss of liberation.

By this moment he has gone some sort of distance in the Buddhist path, and here he likes to see more results. For that he develops his discipline in speech and behavior. Furthermore he develops some qualities which cause him to reduce defilements that disturb his peace of mind. They are;

- i. Practice of vigilance for the purpose of meditation (*Jagariyānuyoga*)
- ii. Discipline of senses / Restraint of senses (*Indriyasamvara*)
- iii. Discipline of speech (*Mitabhāni*)
- iv. Discussion about impermanence and the dependent origination (*Dhammasākacchā*)
- v. Desire of solitude (*Viveka*)

According to Buddhism, the period when the Buddha's message appears in the world is the most valuable moment that we have. If someone who is skillful knows the value of this chance, he always uses his time in the proper way. Here, he spends his valuable time to practice this message controlling his sleep. He sleeps when only he needs. He dedicates his entire life to live with the Dhamma.

With the understanding he controls his senses which are eyes, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. When objects come to these senses, he acts with awareness as defilements can't disturb his peace of mind. Because he practices wise reflection (*Yoniso manasikāra*), he spends every moment mindfully reflecting on the impermanence of his body and mind.

Further, he saves his words when he speaks because of right understanding. It is uncomfortable to speak rubbish because he has right thoughts. His right thoughts don't give him any chance to tell lies, rubbish, malicious and harsh words and, since he doesn't like to disturb his pure mind. And he speaks only important things.

Especially he discusses about the important topics in Buddhism such as impermanence, the dependent origination, selflessness (egolessness), five aggregates, and four noble truths in order to rid of unsatisfactoriness. He always cleans his knowledge by discussing and listening to the sublime truth what the Buddha taught.

And he spends his leisure time by reflecting on the world reality and meditating. Therefore, he likes more solitude than socializing with others and talking rubbish. Every moment is so important to him when he lives in this world with investigating the triple gem the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

By practicing all above good qualities every moment he develops mindfulness and wisdom. Living in the present moment being aware of body and mind he always reflects everything as impermanent. This is the only way that we can become a skillful person according to the Buddha's teachings since we can overcome suffering of old age, sickness and death in this way. In this situation, we are able to get rid of suffering while we are living. Further, we can live peacefully in the complex society. As the result of practicing deliverance path, we can live without jealousy, among the people who are jealous. Also, we can live without anger (or hate) among angry (hateful) people. Further, we are able to live in good mental health among mentally unhealthy people. Also, we can live happily without yearning (longing) for sensual pleasures among those who are yearning for them. This is the lifestyle of a skillful person that the Buddha points out kindly in his message. This is the result of a message which is immediately effective with visible results.



May the Triple Gem Bless you! තෙරුවන් සරණයි!

May all beings be well happy and peaceful! (සියලු සත්ත්වයෝ සුවපත් වෙත්වා!)

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